

Kristin K Howard

June 13, 2006

It was the morning of June 13, 2006 and I was on my way to work. When I came up over the hill, the traffic was stopped. I am told, there was a car in front of me, I hit the brakes, swerved off the side of the road, missed the car in front of me but when my car swerved back onto the expressway, the front passenger side of my car hit the back driver's side of a stopped semi at somewhere between 65 to 70 miles per hour.

For days, they were not certain I was going to live. After about 3 or 4 days, when they told my family I was going to live, they didn't expect me to have the use of the right side of my body. I was in a coma for a week. When I began to show signs of waking up, they were expecting me to be in the hospital anywhere between 6 months to 1 year. I shocked them all. Including the 9 days in a coma, 3 weeks of post traumatic amnesia and about 3 weeks of rehab, I was in the hospital for seven weeks. I feel that the support I felt and had behind me from both my family and doctors was the motivation I needed to get started on the long road of rehab I have been going through.

While in the hospital, I received a few very important types of therapy to help me be functional again. That included Physical, Speech and Occupational therapy. They were able to help me get back to being functional on a physical level, ie. Walking and talking. But, that is where it stopped in the hospital.

When I was discharged, I realized how much help I was going to need. I wasn't able to use stairs by myself, use knives or the stove; shower by myself, the list goes on...That is why I went to therapy. While there, I worked on those things and so much more. Eventually, I was even given spelling tests, like a third-grader. I was given a list of several words, like some of them would be like four and five-letter words like 'walk,' or 'store,' or 'shopping,' or 'pizza.' A lot of times I'd have to go back the following day with the same words because I wasn't able to spell them. While I was working on walking up and down stairs and other things with a physical therapist, and also had someone coming to my home everyday to make I was able to do things by myself. That is one of the reasons I needed and am very grateful for Attendant Care.

I was able to re-learn how to live on my own again. And without that support, I'd probably be sitting at my parents' house on the couch watching television right now like I was for the first month because I wasn't able to do anything.

So, below is a Timeline of my recovery.

1. June 13, 2006 I was in my car accident and they didn't know if I was going to make it through the night
2. June 16, 2006 Dr's prognosis looked positive, but was aware of my TBI because I shattered the whole bone around my right eye and cracked it in a few other places.
3. June 21, 2006 I woke from my coma, with a long road ahead of me
4. June 26, 2011 Dr's moved me into the rehab unit for physical, speech and Occupational therapy.
5. July 19, 2006 I was walking myself down to therapy, feeding myself, bathing myself (with someone in the other room) and now beginning to remember where I was and what happened

6. August 2, 2006 I was Discharged from the hospital into the care of my parents. I wasn't able to shower by myself, use the stove, knives, drive, work... the list goes on.
7. Mid-August 2006 I began the out-patient program at St. Joes in Ypsilanti, and met with Rob from Behavioral Consultants. The hard work began. I was taken there 5 days a week by a company called "Care Transport". It is a transportation assistance program for people like me.
8. Mid-April 2007 I started Drivers Ed.... Again. I got my license at 16 (13 yrs before) and now I had to do it again? Yea, it took me another 4 months to become more confident and trust myself.
9. June 25, 2007 Went on my first "date" since my accident with a guy I worked with before.
10. July 2007 Discharged from the Hospital rehab program, but was told/suggested I look into other programs because of my TBI. They weren't going to be able to give me everything that I needed.
11. August 2007 finally got my license!!
12. October 2007 I admitted myself into the program at Willowbrook Rehabilitation Center in Brighton. I really didn't think I needed it. I was only going because my mom and Dr's felt it was going to be the best step to help me get back to where I was before.
13. February 2008, started my first job since I my accident. I did an internship in the Marketing and PR department at Zingerman's in Ann Arbor. I got my degree in 2005 in both marketing and PR and they Willowbrook) wanted to help me begin relearning/using skills I knew before my accident.
14. June 2008 I started my first paid job since my accident. I was the director of Communications and Marketing for a company that did international sales of machinery, part-time. It lasted about 6 months. I was having trouble with remembering to follow-through with things I said (memory) as well as accountability. When they did my Nero-psyc in 2007 they said this may be something I will always have trouble with.
15. September 2008, I was discharged from Willowbrook's in-patient program. However, I was and STILL am part of their out-patient program.
16. August 6, 2010 Married the man of my dreams! He has even said, he doesn't know where we would be at if it hadn't been for all of the help and support I was given to make the recovery I have.

It has been 5½ years since my accident. In the time, I have realized how much/how far I have come. First they didn't think I was going to live, and now I have been able to cut back on how much therapy I am going to. I'm driving again. I've got a job. AND, Running the Detroit Free Press ½ Marathon on October 16, 2011. If it wasn't for ALL OF THE SUPPORT I was given through Therapy and Doctor's, my family would agree and say, I would not have become the person I am today. I got married in

ONE LAST THING. Just imagine you get a phone call one morning saying there has been a really bad car accident and you need to get to the hospital. On the way, the ONLY thinking about is your loved one. You show up distraught, not knowing what happened. Knowing that the hospital is going to do everything they can to help that person, and when they get out, they are able to get all of the help they need to make their best recovery. NOW, think about the same situation, but while you are driving to the hospital you begin blaming yourself. It could be your fault that your loved one does NOT get everything they need to make their fullest recovery.

Don't let that happen on your watch.